

# THE MIDLAND

VOLUME EIGHT

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# THE MIDLAND

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## THE ONE THING

By RAYMOND KNISTER

As it puffed down the road that cloud-tapestried October day, the team found the wagon-load of sugar-beets behind it increasingly heavy. The road was clay, and deeply rutted, notwithstanding the wide and deep ditches draining it on either side. Presently the driver pulled up his horses. As their wet flanks heaved, their breath showing in the dank and heavy air, he looked about him. The land was perfectly flat. From the slight elevation of the road he could see long bleached after-harvest grain-fields, varied with dull tracts of beets, and rows of soiled-appearing corn-shocks, stretching sombrely, wire-fenced, to the backs of the farms, where stood thin forests, which did not shut out streaks of the gray sky. Though these distant forests did not noticeably obtrude on the vision, they hid the horizon on all sides, and his gaze might travel in certain directions so far as two miles, but always it brought up against trees. Across the ditch at his left, beyond the wire fence, was a solid-looking block of corn, still uncut. A rustling came from this, but a few yards in, and a voice, not loud, but high-pitched and monotonous, which seemed to give forth curses.

As the voice came nearer to the end of the field, a very short man, of scarcely more than half the height of the

corn, but of ordinary thickness of body, was disclosed. He looked up the road, scarcely ceasing his shrill muttering, and, bringing his gaze back to look down it, caught sight of the teamster.

"Eh! *Hello!*" he shouted loudly, his voice much lower in pitch now.

"Hello!" replied the man, just about to drive on. "Pretty muddy, ain't it!"

The little man did not answer, but looked after the teamster in silence.

The latter, on reaching the railway spur where the beets were unloaded, was not long in imparting his bit of news.

"Say, I heard that little fellow, Billy Dulekington, swearin' like the divvle as I come past his place. I kinda stopped to give the team their wind, and first thing I hears him cussin' away like four of a kind, kinda thin and weepy-like."

"You don't say!" His colleague straightened for a moment to loosen a crick in his spine, then bent to the job again. "Oh, he's queer, always queer. Funny thing, though, I never knew him to be so much for cussin'. Kind of satisfied, always seemed. The one thing he cares about is his horses."

\* \* \* \* \*

Hitherto Billy Dulekington's queerness was a matter which had not at all preoccupied the community, and it was only in referring to him in the presence of strangers that one was reminded of it. He was a bachelor, an old bachelor now, but he was still saluted with the familiar diminutive. There was something pathetic in a man of fifty-three years, who carried at most times a bristle of beard speckled with white, being greeted always as "Billy".

No one, practically, had ever taken him in the slightest degree into account. When he had been young, his small



stature and the amusedly tolerant attitude of the buxom and well-grown young women of the district had kept him from the manifestation of any serious intentions in regard to courtship; and excepting this, a certain amalgam of pride and stubbornness should have made him avoid seeking it. For, aside from his shortness, he was not handsome. His chin was narrow, but came well forward; his nose was long, and almost perpendicularly overhung his upper lip. His little eyes were fishlike below a sloping forehead which was perpetually wrinkling with the rising of his eyebrows in apparent astonishment at the simplest remark made by anyone with whom he happened to be conversing. One seeing him now would find it difficult to visualize him as a child.

Still, it was not at all apparent to a neighbour, speaking with him, that he had ever concerned himself much with whatever in himself or in his life had been peculiar. Almost it was possible to believe him to have been unaware of it.

As a young man he had enjoyed his first vacation by going to the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto in one of its early years. He found much to interest him there, but what pleased him more than anything else was the string of imported Clydesdales. He became enamoured of one filly, which had won first prize in the two-year-old class, and haunted the stables where she was continually waited upon, until the day he was obliged to come home. There was something impressive in the size and strength and beauty of these magnificent beasts, something which enchanted him and called forth his longing.

Before he left he secured the address of the importer who owned the filly of his choice, and when, two years later, his father died, he went to see this dealer. The horse he had wished to own had been disposed of, he was told, but he was able, after a long and solemnly beatified process of choice, to pick out one which he liked almost

as well. Later, he came to like this mare even better in some ways, for she was heavier-bodied and more squarely built than his first love. He paid for her by putting a mortgage on the farm, which was, until then, free from incumbrance.

That was a main day in his life on which he unloaded Lowry Lass from the freight car, and brought her to his farm. It was Saturday. There were neighbors in the village, in the stores, in the blacksmith shop, everywhere, it seemed. On each the serious task of appraisal and of commendation was, in his presence, incumbent. More people were met on the road, and though with many of them Billy had scarcely exchanged a word for months, to all the circumstances of the quest were imparted with unaccustomed and composed absence of reticence.

His purchase caused a seven-days' sensation, and proved a gratefully fresh topic and source of difference, for no one in that part of the country had paid so much for a single horse. When the discussion had simmered down, it was, in the main, settled that he was foolhardy; there, beyond a covert jealousy on the part of a few neighbors, the matter dropped. From one of these latter Billy purchased a team-mate for his mare, a great raw-boned animal, nearly as large as his own, lacking quality, but which was, with characteristic equity, equally well-tended.

In the following years he worked hard. Illness had always been unknown to him, and since coming to manhood he had usually found himself capable of working advantageously beside men much larger than himself. With his stubby legs and puckered brow he was capable of leading any man he had ever hired at hoeing corn; and when sugar-beets came to be grown in that district, with his short and tireless back he could have held his own at beet-thinning with most of the Belgians, who were held as a rule to be far superior, at such back-breaking work, to the natives. With puffing and straining he shov-

elled his own beets from his wagon up into the high box of the railway car.

He did not hire much help in those years. His farm was one hundred acres, but he preferred to plant no more hoe-crop than he was able to manage himself, with one helper at the busiest part of the season.

He was dumb in his obsession with his horses, except on the rare occasions when strangers chanced to come to his farm who he imagined should know a horse when they saw one. The conversations on these occasions tended to become somewhat recondite, involving discussion of this or that greatly pedigreed individual; for, having attended one or two of the greater exhibitions, Billy was the local authority on his subject. He was emphatic in his deprecation of the new style of Clydesdales, just beginning to "come in"; the upstanding, light-feathered, bright-gaited kind he held to be like hackneys, carriage-horses, and that was for him the lowest depth of condemnation. The almost uniform lack of enthusiasm attested in regard to his own stock he explained in various ways; as he recalled their conversation, this man must have owned Clydes himself, that one was too frightened of ministering to his pride; the other knew nothing of that whereof he spoke. He had tried to interest some of the big horsemen of the East and Quebec in his stock. His herd had increased steadily with the lapse of years, but he could not assure even himself that it increased likewise in quality. Meanwhile he continued to keep the other branches of livestock represented, but not proportionately, nor in like quality, on the farm — pigs, milch cows, and a herd of steers which roamed in his "bush" in summer and were tied in one end of his barn in winter.

After about fifteen years of this he was gradually becoming more prosperous; not very rapidly, for many of his acres went to supply pasturage and hay for his growing herd of horses. Still, the mortgage was paid off, and

there was a gradually increasing balance to his credit in the bank.

It was at about this time, in the late autumn, that the father of his brother Tom's wife died in the next township. Billy was going to be present at the funeral. He curried and harnessed his horse, hitched it to the buggy, blanketed it, and left it tied at the tie-post beside his back door while he went in the house to dress. By the time these preparations were made he was a little late. He had not made enough allowance for the unaccustomed drive by quitting work earlier than usual for dinner. He was just reaching up hastily to pull the blanket from the back of the "driver" to go away, when he heard a squeal at the horse-stable. He ran, jolting over the rough clay ground, and found three of his big colts loose in the building. In the corner beside the door two long hay-forks were knocked down. He had left the colts outside in the barnyard, but somehow they had opened the door. On getting inside they must have found the quarters cramped, behind the other horses, and trying to turn around, and jostling each other, perhaps kicking, the forks were knocked down with the sharp tines sticking up. He watched their limbs narrowly as he drove them out again, and fancied that one of them limped slightly. Following it, he noticed that a little blood appeared on its left hind pastern.

At once he scrambled over the barn-yard fence and ran to his buggy. As he came near the village, which was three miles from his home, he met the funeral procession emerging from it. First came the minister, alone, with a cream-colored silk scarf wrapped about his little gray beard, for it was a dun fall day, full of a raw wind; then a democrat full of pall-bearers, then the hearse, then the mourners. In the second carriage of these was the tall brother, with his wife and children. Billy had stopped his horse beside the ditch, and taken off his hat. Squeezed in the right corner of the buggy seat, his little thinly-

haired head seemed almost hidden in his huge turned-up overcoat collar, as he looked askance over it at the passing procession from his fish-like little eyes below the astonished, unconsciously raised eyebrows. His brother eyed him redly, without gesture, and his sister-in-law seemed, whether from grief or pique, not to see him. He waited in the raw fall wind which was streaming over the flat land, until the long procession of fifty or sixty "rigs" had passed. Then he went on, belabouring his horse with blows and with hoarse words.

The veterinarian was not at home. No. He had gone to the funeral. Billy turned away. He must have been too preoccupied to notice the doctor among the passing procession. He drove back leisurely, trusting to meet him returning from the funeral, for the cemetery was only three-quarters of a mile from the village. He did meet many people returning home, some of whom looked at him queerly, but not the man he sought. He hated to go into the cemetery now. It was only a short distance back; and the doctor would hear his message as soon as he returned home, and would at all events find it necessary to return there for his instruments.

Billy did not see him until the next morning at half-past ten o'clock. One of the farmers present at the funeral, Doctor Hickson explained, had asked him to come home with him to look at a sick steer. He had not returned — the drive was long — until after midnight, and he had slept late in the morning, not being aware of Billy's message. Hickson was a large man, with a sandy moustache, a certain dignity. When Billy's voice, hoarse with anger and the cold he had caught the day before, burst out at him, he was wrathful in a discomfited manner, his customary pugnacity of tone ineffectual before what he sensed of absurdity in such an altercation.

He announced blood-poisoning. It seemed that the fork-tines had pierced into the ankle-joint, and that the swelling would not go down in the future, but would remain much as it then was.

He was somewhat calmed when he had finished his diagnosis and recommendations for treatment.

"I hear this morning," he said to Billy, "I hear that your brother doesn't think much of your not coming out to the funeral."

"No? It wasn't my fault. I was all ready to go."

That was seven years ago. Tom had soon learned the real reason for his brother's defection, and begun to find excuses for him in his heart. But the breach, slight as it seemed, could not easily be closed, and he was unable to obviate a change in his conduct. They nodded, spoke when they met, and never ceased to "change threshing"; but their neighboring ceased. There were three, four farms between those of the two brothers. Billy seldom left his except to get the necessities at the store, and when he had a hired man he frequently sent him on such errands. He seldom met any of the family. Still, there seemed to be a notable amelioration in the manner of Gertie, Tom's wife, as time went on; and the children were really friendly when they saw him — taller now than "Uncle Billy", all of them. As for Tom, constraint had always been a main ingredient in whatever coldness he had exhibited. Though trouble-makers had given Billy a few bad hours by telling him that Tom had said that he, Billy, "cared more for his old horses than for his family," he had by and by come to disbelieve the tale.

Billy had been becoming less sociable as time went on. Until he was almost forty he had occasionally gone to church; sometimes in the winter he had attended one or two socials or concerts. At the former, he usually, by the lottery method, managed to get a partner with whom to eat the customary lunch — and some young fellow accompanied her home. Now this had long ceased, and he was fast coming into the category, always, in the country, seeking for itself new recruits, of the queer. On some winter nights the light from his lantern could be seen gleaming from the windows of his stable at ten or eleven

o'clock. He was currying the favourite ones of his numerous horses. It was to him a joy familiar and recurrently consummate to slick the colts down with rags, to rub their pasterns, brush out their manes and their "feather", to admire the round spring of rib on their well-turned bodies. Summer nights he worked always until dark. Often after that, in the dusk, he might be seen trotting a little colt up the lane. He broke them to halter very young; they were then more tractable, and proved so later. For years he had always driven two teams, making one "round" of his long fields with one, and leaving it to rest while he made the next "round" with the other. He needed no rest himself. Still, he was not making as much money now as he had been making. He could not part with any but the most inferior of his horses, and, to his mind, each even of those embodied the culmination of quality. His herd continued to become larger, yearly requiring a little more pasturage and the use of more land for hay and grain, and even encroaching on the space in his barn before devoted wholly to cattle.

With all this he became more generous in his outlay for them. Every one of them must have a blanket to keep its hair short in winter, though he told himself that it was because he had from year to year been obliged to postpone putting up the fine new bank barn which he constantly visualized for his horses. They must have stock-food by the barrel, bran by the ton.

As for his life in the house, nothing could be more narrowly avaricious, in the matter both of time and expense. Food and clothes he bought in bulk, comforts only when they had promoted themselves to the rank of necessities. His rooms were neat, not only because of his care of them, but because of the paucity of effects which might have given them a cluttered appearance. The roof of the room in which he slept developed a leak. He moved into the next one, and when it rained caught the water in his old room in a tin pan.



At the beginning of the eighth year of his estrangement from his brother, his favorite horse began to give evidence of ill-health. It was one of the offspring of the original Lowry Lass whom he had brought home from the East, the only one which he now owned. Lena was the name he had given her. For some time she had attracted Billy's observation as being spiritless and failing in appetite: on this day her condition appeared to be sufficient cause for anxiety. Her uneasiness alarmed him the more for seeming inexplicable. He did not cease his work of husking corn in the barn, and continued until nightfall to persuade himself that it was of no account, that the next day would see her chasing the young colts about the barn-yard. But he had no sooner finished his brief supper than he began to prepare for the drive to town, and to recollect the things which he needed and must buy there.

It was January. The night was already quite dark. A thaw had broken up the road, which was now a mass of hummocked and holey clay, with a pair of deep, narrow channels jaggedly traversing it longitudinally. In these the wheels revolved, bringing up watery mud, and making a continuous rolling splash. The wind was not strong, but seemed high, and the telephone poles on the other side of the deep ditch rang forth for him dully with deep resonance. The poles seemed miles apart, as the horse plodded and wallowed onward, while he nursed an anxiety which half consciously he hoped so to make baseless. . . . They became the thrumming years, as he puddled along and past them. Again their sound reminded him of music he had heard at Flossie Tintern's recital some years before. It was not often that he was reminded of music. He began to whistle, but ceased, his deviations from the tune formed such a travesty of the remembered impression.

He occupied himself with recollecting the years which his love of his horses had given him, certain things an



infinitesimally different life might have brought him, certain hours of his youth, certain episodes in the childhood of himself and of his brother Tom. "Tommy and Willy!" What differences between them then? He had forgotten, but not forgotten their round of chumming and wrangling, to which his memory now lent a sadness immeasurably pleasing. He appeared a most matter-of-fact little man, unaware of any stunting of his own life, of any lack in his happiness; and now he thought suddenly to see that life and that lack with eyes other than his own. Every few moments he lifted the fixed regard bent on the swift dripping spokes revolving muddy-yellow in the light of the dangling lantern, imagining that he had traversed miles, and cried in his thin voice, which, rising, always seemed on the point of breaking: "Gidyap! Gidyap!"

Doctor Hinkson was at home, and as soon as Billy had done his bit of buying at one of the general stores they set forth for the farm. Now the moon occasionally showed her face tauntingly among the predacious and headlong clouds, and the wind still drew droning music from the telephone wires, as they drove over the shadows of the poles upon the track, but Billy's thoughts wandered back no longer from the frozen headland of the present. The two said little beyond questions and replies relevant to the condition of the mare, Lena. In due time the house and barn came to view. Far back from the road, they looked peculiarly isolated and unkempt, almost abandoned. The little house especially appeared to Billy, somehow, in a manner new to it, pathetic, as they thumped softly down the lane from the road.

Billy tied his "driver" up, unchecking it first, that he might be able to reach its head; blanketed it; and followed Dr. Hinkson to the horse-stable. Lena was in one of the box-stalls. She had been uneasy, for the straw was bunched unevenly about the floor. She came forward to meet them, lowering her large and intelligent-

looking head, with its narrow white stripe down between the eyes. There was a moisture at the nostrils. Hinkson felt her ears.

"Fever."

He continued for a moment to look her over.

"Well?"

"Hh-m! It's a case of distemper, with influenza involved."

"'Tain't serious, though? It won't be serious?"

"Well, no; not if we're careful. Give her plenty of bran mash, and whatever water she will take. I'll drop around in a couple of days. Did I leave my mitts in the buggy? I suppose we can mosey back to town now."

It was more than a week later. A lantern, upheld by its wire handle stuck horizontally in a crack in the plank partition, lighted the box-stall dimly, except for the huge shadow cast by Lena, and by the three men at one side of it.

"Well, she's a valuable mare," Tom was saying, his breath making a slight fog before him. "She'd be quite a little loss."

"The worst of your good horses, though, something's bound to happen them, and then their value's cut in two," noted Hinkson after a leisured instant.

The two big men did not smile; they spoke quietly. They failed in Billy's eyes to express a sense of what this danger to Lena really entailed. He went back, in a moment, over the week of nights he had watched and cared for the horse, and the mazes of thoughts. Perhaps if they had urgently expressed concern or sympathy he should have been only the more suspicious of them. At best he was not able to dispel a latent impression that the two larger men were somehow siding against him in a concealed amusement.

"But — doesn't she seem to be picking up a little better now than she was a day or two ago?" he had to ask diffidently. "What do you think, Doctor?"

"Well," rejoined Hickson, gravely considerate, "I guess she is. That was about the crisis, one week after the case opened. But I see now that I'll have to lance that throat." It was the second time he had made the latter announcement in the course of the vacillant conversation.

"You've had to drench her with gruel, I'd say?" remarked Tom, shifting his position. "She couldn't eat or drink anything with her throat like that."

"Oh, yes."

"Well; too bad: if you had sent one of the neighbor boys over to my place I could have come over just as well as not. You'd have to have a barrel to stand on, I suppose?"

"Lena's quiet. I tie her head up high, and I can reach her easy with the bottle." Billy did not mention the necessity of standing in the manger to administer the dose.

"Well, gentlemen," said Hinkson officially, who had gone to his satchel for the lancet. "Here we are! Got her tied strong there?"

Billy went to one side of the mare, and Tom to the other, as much as possible to keep her from moving while the lancing was being done.

"Tim Sheen, he had a mare down with this once, you know," began Tom, after a moment, when the horse jerked slightly and the veterinarian stepped down weightily from the box on which he had been standing.

"There, she's done!" he asserted.

"Tim was drenchin' the gruel to her just like you, Billy," continued Tom, "and all the time feelin' her throat, to see if she was gittin' the lump. He kinda thought she had one all right, but old Doc Kearn didn't think she had;—didn't want to lance. Well, he *kept* givin' her the gruel, and urgin' Kearn to lance her throat, but he wouldn't, for more'n a week, and then first thing *they* knew, the lump bust in her throat."

"Good-bye mare, then, eh?" said the veterinarian, smiling.

"Yuh! There was the time Tim realized on her hide. Haw!"

Billy was silent.

"Well, now," said Hinkson, turning, and speaking in a new tone, "I'm pretty sure you'll find this fixes it, Dulckington. You'll have to keep giving her the gruel for a few days, of course, and giving her every care. I'll drop around day after tomorrow."

The two brothers went out with him into the keen-aired and austere starred brown night, and Tom talked with him, while the veterinarian took the halter from his horse's head and put it in the rear of the buggy, then unstrapped the blanket, and tucked it in around his knees outside of the buffalo-robe, and for yet a few minutes after that. Then, when he had rattled away over the rocky roads, the two brothers talked, of crops, of neighbors, of the taxes for a new drain, of Tom's children. After that Tom walked home, head bent to keep the biting air from his throat, in what seemed a ghost of summer moonlight, from a moon far-slid and waning over the distant forest.

Billy went in to have a last look at Lena and the other horses. A few minutes later he trudged wearily to the house; and, after holding his hands, crooked with the cold, over the cook-stove for a time, abstractedly shaking his head in the darkness and gazing at the red cracks of firelight, he climbed to the cold bedroom, and slept soundly.

It was more than two months later. Billy was busy with his spring plowing. Plowing was one of his favorite jobs about the farm; he liked above most things, though he did not formulate to himself any reason for the liking, the constant attempt to make each furrow straighter than the last, and, when a good furrow was attained, to keep

those following it right, to have each of his "lands" properly and symmetrically shaped. And he was proud of the straight and steady gait of his teams, perhaps a source of his skill and his pleasure in it. An odd figure he appeared to anyone passing who saw him, with the two huge drafters, forging so far ahead of him, and making more evident than ever his disproportionate littleness. His faded overalls were turned up two or three inches above his shoes, and he stepped along with brisk, brief strides. His second team was waiting at the end of the field as usual.

He had been thinking much more, since the conversation of the night on which Lena had begun her recovery, about Tom and Tom's family. The second boy, now, Bill, named after himself, was a bright lad, already well-grown, much taller than himself. Until recently the idea of "getting on in years" had never occurred to him; now he was beginning to accustom himself to the thought of, sometime, willing his property to someone.

But he was a tough little knot yet, he felt. The passing years had meant nothing of change in his strength as yet. The zest of the spring wind, brushing the trees and the manes of his horses, the various and wholly relevant notes of the new birds, the inconceivable freshness of colour on distant foliage, the smell of upturning soil, seemed strangely to banish any sombre implication from a new disposition toward his namesake.

His horses had a new-old dearness for him. He would go to their heads and tighten more snugly the hamestraps, loosened slightly with the heavy pulling, in order that the load might not rest on the points of their shoulders. Now he bethought himself and took time to stop and eat an apple and give the core to Lena, working today for the first time since her sickness.

As he came to the head of the field, at the road, he saw his brother coming along with a load of "chop". Undecided at first, he finally waited for him.

"Hello! Hello!" called Tom, somewhat vociferously. It seemed to Billy, as he answered him, glanced at him with those unconscious raised eyebrows, that he was making a too obvious effort to prolong a truce, that in his effusiveness he was confessing too plainly to past bitterness. Billy half unconsciously became more constrained. Had Tom begun to think of his son?

"I see the old mare's around again," Tom was continuing easily, now resting accumbent, his elbow on a bag of grain.

"Yes. . . . Yes, she's coming fast now."

"Well, the old girl wouldn't last much longer anyhow, I suppose, but still, you hate to lose her."

"Won't last much longer!" cried Billy in sudden ire. "She's got enough life in her to — Won't last much longer!" —

"Why, you know, a horse can't last forever, no more'n a man. You don't want to get too set on those horses of yours, you know. There's nothing perfect in this world. I guess you sold off the best ones anyway, and got the money out of them."

Billy hopped. "Set on those horses of mine, eh! They're the best horses in this part of the country, and don't you forget it!" he stormed in his high voice. "Can't last —" he caught his breath — "Can't last forever, eh? We'll see who lasts longer, you or me — or my horses!"

"Get around here, Kate! Crazy fool!" So he described his brother to the team.

But Tom had driven on by this time.

Billy continued his plowing, perfectly careless now as to the manner in which it was done, rehearsing to himself the conversation again and again. He left the field earlier than was his wont, finished his chores earlier, and busied himself fondly for hours with his horses. Then he tramped up the uncarpeted wooden stairs to bed.

He was unable to sleep.

Had Tom really said what the gossips had told him he had, those seven, — eight years ago, that he, Billy, cared more for his horses than for his family? Than for his own soul, one had said. Perhaps those folks had not invented it. It was not probable that they had made it up out of nothing. He had never sold any of his best horses! Never had he meant to, he was sure. So far as concerned his own judgment, he was convinced that he was lucky to get rid of the poorer ones at low prices. Still, had not some of the purchasers, one or two anyway, taken his own horses and won with them in the show-rings? And done better still with the second and third generations? Did that really mean that those he had kept were still better, notwithstanding his disinclination to spare the time and expense necessary to fit them for exhibition? These many years! His trust in his own judgment could not prove baseless, after these many years! Tom had got hold of some of his stock, too, through another buyer. Tom must imagine that his two or three head were better than anything Billy had. . . . "Jealous . . . jealous," he thought, as he dozed, between sleeping and waking. "Too set on those horses. . . ."

The thing began to obsess, to gain occupancy of his mind as the weeks passed and he worked on alone, preparing his land and putting his crops into the ground. Though he had not time for anything else, besides eating and the minimum care of his stock, he had plenty of time to think of it as he rode on the discs, as he trudged stubbornly across the lumpy fields behind the drag. It began to tell on him, though he would never have admitted it, scarcely would have realized it himself, and would have been astonished had he been told what a large proportion of his time and thoughts the old fester occupied.

He decided to hire a man a few weeks earlier than usual this summer. Somehow he did not feel capable of all and every sort of work alone. In due course he got a lank boy from the next township. The dull and varying

round of days went on. The lad was glad enough, of an evening, to quit work before Billy did, and to go down to the village on his wheel. Billy, he said, was certainly queer. No joke could make him crack a grin, and on the other hand, he didn't have go enough to get mad and swear, not even at the horses; a terror to work, though. It is to be supposed that the boy found the life somewhat sombre.

One night as he was snoring heartily in his little room beneath the sloping roof, he was aroused suddenly. Moonlight in a slanting strip lay before the window. There was a sense for an instant of a silence dead, inanimate, broken; then he awoke to a chilling voice from the next room, thin, almost evil, yet almost tearful.

"Nothing but a damn fool! You're nothing but a damn fool!" it whined, quite rapidly. "Some man ought to knock your head in, they should! Knock your old head in! Nothing but a damn fool! I *told* you you're nothing but a damn fool." Billy seemed to stir a little. "Ever know me to run down another man's horse?" the voice went on, high pitched but not loud. "Only a damn fool!"

An interval of silence was a reanimated corpse. The lank youth shivered. Was Billy mad? Did he mean to affront him? What had he ever said to Billy about horses? He racked his brain. Should he throw the little old runt out of the window, he asked himself with one portion of his mind, in an attempt to bring home to himself a sense of his own bravado. He'd wait —

The thin voice, always on the point of breaking, went on, in a repetition of the same words over and over. He was sure he heard a sniffing, was almost sure of a sob.

"Ever know me to run down another man's horse? That's no way for a decent man to do! Only a damn fool! Some good man ought to knock your old head in! I *told* you you're nothing but a damn fool!"



## "THREE SOLDIERS": A REVIEW

By GEORGE CARVER

Whether or no Mr. John Dos Passos has contributed a page to the autobiography of the nation by writing his *Three Soldiers* and thereby added to literature is a matter of small moment and does not much concern us; whether or no it is well enough thought out and beautifully enough expressed, however, to come straight home to the bosoms and business of men are questions that, from the very nature of the material made use of, demand a definite decision.

It is a book toward which one cannot remain indifferent, but unless one is careful judgment will be based only upon individual experience in the service or upon that obtained at second-hand since the war.

As a novel the story centers upon the actions and reactions of Daniel Fuselli, an Italian-American, an Indiana farmer named Chrisfield, and a sensitive, high strung musician, John Andrews of Virginia and New York, all three of whom entered the army with something of the spirit of service only to have that spirit completely destroyed by the treatment accorded them in the name of military discipline, and left it moral and physical wrecks, Fuselli and Chrisfield to disappear into the European underworld of army deserters and Andrews to be sent to Leavenworth Prison.

But the story is negligible, a mere chain made up of links of hideous torture, warping passion, devastating violence, and some few touches of rare delicacy.

For instance in Part One Fuselli witnesses this incident:

The boy lay with his eyes closed, his chalk-white face half hidden by the blankets; he was very still.

"Well, will you get up and go to the guardhouse, or have we got to carry you there?" shouted the sergeant.

The guards laid hold of him gingerly and pulled him up to a sitting posture.

"All right, yank him out of bed."

The frail form in khaki shirt and whitish drawers was held up for a moment between the two men. Then it fell a limp heap on the floor.

"Say, Sarge, he's fainted."

"The hell he has. . . . Say, Morrison, ask one of the orderlies to come up from the Infirmary."

"He ain't fainted. . . . The kid's dead," said the other man. "Give me a hand."

The sergeant helped lift the body on the bed again.

"Well, I'll be goddamed," said the sergeant.

The eyes had opened. They covered the head with a blanket.

Again, in Part Three Chrisfield is saved by Andrews from certain punishment when the former's inflammable temper, rendered ungovernable by the life about him, impels him to attack a comrade:

"What are you dreamin' about Indiana?" said Judkins punching Chrisfield jovially in the ribs.

Chrisfield doubled his fists and gave him a smashing blow in the jaw that Judkins warded off just in time.

Judkins's face flamed red. He swung with a long bent arm.

"What the hell d'you think this is?" shouted somebody.

"What's he want to hit me for?" spluttered Judkins, breathless.

Men had edged in between them.

"Lemme git at him."

"Shut up, you fool," said Andy, drawing Chrisfield away. The company scattered sullenly. Some of the men lay down in the long uncut grass in the shade of the ruins of the house, one of the walls of which made a wall of the shanty where they lived.

In Part Three Chrisfield encounters a wounded officer whom he recognizes as a man who on his way up from the rank has taken every opportunity to make Chrisfield's life miserable:

Something glittered in the irregular fringe of sun and shadow. A man was sitting hunched up on the ground with his fatigue cap pulled over his eyes so that the little gold bar just caught the horizontal sunlight. . . . The man lifted his head slowly.

"Give me some water, buddy," said Anderson in a weak voice.

Chrisfield handed him his canteen roughly in silence.

"Where's Colonel Evans?" asked Anderson in a thin petulant voice.

Chrisfield did not reply but stared at him sullenly. The canteen had dropped from his hand and lay on the ground in front of him. . . .

"First you was a corporal, then you was a sergeant, and now you're a lieutenant," said Chrisfield slowly.

"You'd better tell me where Colonel Evans is. . . . You must know. . . . He's up the road somewhere," said Anderson struggling to get to his feet.

Chrisfield walked away without answering. A cold hand was round the grenade in his pocket. He walked away slowly looking at his feet.

Suddenly he found he had pressed the spring of the grenade. He struggled to pull it out of his pocket. It stuck. . . . His arm and his cold fingers that clutched the grenade seemed paralyzed. Then a warm joy went through him. He had thrown it.

Anderson was standing, swaying backwards and forwards. The explosion made the woods quake. A thick rain of yellow leaves came down. Anderson was flat on the ground. He was so flat he seemed to have sunk into the ground.

Chrisfield pressed the spring of the other grenade and threw it with his eyes shut. It burst among the thick new-fallen leaves.

On the other hand, however, there is an occasional glimpse of beauty. For example, in Part Five Andrews and Jean, a French girl whom he meets during his attendance at the Sorbonne, have spent a day in the country near Paris. They are on their way home:

"I didn't mean to say that," she said in a gentle, tired voice. "You know, I'm not a very nice person." The greenish glow of the lamp lit up the contour of one of her cheeks as she tilted her

head up, and glimmered in her eyes. A soft sentimental sadness suddenly took hold of Andrews; he felt as he used to feel when, as a small child, his mother used to tell him Br' Rabbit stories, and he would feel himself drifting helplessly on the stream of her soft voice, narrating, drifting towards something unknown and very sad, which he could not help.

And in Part Two, again, occurs this passage, beautiful though vastly different:

Fuselli was looking into a pair of eyes that shone in the lamp-light; a hand was held out to him.

"So long, kid," said a boyish voice. "I don't know who you are, but so long; good luck."

"So long," stammered Fuselli. "Going to the front?"

"Yer goddam right," answered another voice.

The train took up speed again; the clanging of car against car ceased and in a moment they were moving fast before Fuselli's eyes. Then the station was dark and empty again and he was watching the red light grow smaller and paler while the train rumbled on in the darkness.

The method by which this material is molded into shape is simple. One after another the episodes flash before the reader with hardly a word of interpretation. From the opening image:

The company stood at attention, each man looking straight before him at the empty parade ground, where the cinder piles showed purple with evening,

to the closing one:

Andrews turned his eyes towards the door. The M. P. closed the door after them, and followed on his heels down the steps. . . . On John Andrews's writing table the brisk wind rustled among the broad sheets of paper. First one sheet, then another, blew off the table, until the floor was littered with them;

from first to last, scene, episode, concrete happenings appear and disappear in much the same fashion that orders the arrangement of a well made film. There is never a doubt as to the impression of each or as to its

relation to the whole, and this in spite of the fact that the writer has ignored entirely the devices of transition and the element of time. Simple narration, concretely, vividly set down is one of the book's distinctions.

Now, while simplicity is much to be desired in the structure of this sort of novel, something more is needed in the characterization, and except for the three principals, there is a decided lack. The officers, for illustration, are all *important, pompous, entirely unsympathetic*, when the appearance of one or two who were otherwise would, by contrast, have thrown into higher relief those qualities which Mr. Dos Passos desired most to depict. Furthermore the lesser characters among the enlisted men have little or no individuality. There is the army liar, to be sure, in the persons of Dan Cohen, Henslowe, and Aubrey, and the bully in those of various non-commissioned officers. Then there is the meek "Y" secretary, the French girl, the peasant. But in all of them one looks in vain for that final spark which sets character apart from lay figure.

With Fuselli, Chrisfield, and Andrews, though, one is entirely satisfied. To watch Fuselli lose gradually his air of wanting to rise in rank until he sinks to the level of permanent K. P. in Paris is to watch what might have been merely a good soldier become an enemy to society; but to see Andrews go through his experiences, dropping bit by bit habits of gentleness, saneness, and self-respect, is to see the blighting of a soul. Chrisfield has less to lose than either of the others; nevertheless one feels that had his experience been that of proper treatment he would have left the army a better citizen than he was upon going in. In all three speech, thought, and action are invariably in character, and the portraits are complete. For instance Andrews, when he finally arrives in Paris to go to school after his months of torturous slavery, is slightly hysterical. One speech sketches in the whole cycle of emotion:

"I know a man who insists on calling it [the Rive Gauche]

Brooklyn. Awfully funny man . . . never been sober in his life. You must meet him."

Henslowe says this.

Then Andrews:

"Oh, I want to. . . It's a dog's age since I met anyone new except you. I can't live without having a variegated crowd about, can you?"

The method is adequate and the character drawing is, for the most part, well done, but it is the style that seems to be the best thing in the book. Here is simplicity again, in fact, almost baldness, so lacking is the style in any effort toward ornamentation. The chief emphasis is obtained by terse sentences and repetition of important words. Notice, for example, the physical sensation of the following, taken from Part One:

The weight of the pack tugged at his shoulders and made his feet heavy as if they were charged with lead. The sweat ran down his close-clipped head under the overseas cap and streamed into his eyes and down the sides of his nose. Through the tramp of feet he heard confusedly cheering from the sidewalk. In front of him the backs of heads and the swaying packs got smaller, rank by rank, up the street. Above them flags dangled from windows, flags leisurely swaying in the twilight. But the weight of the pack, as the column marched under the arc lights glaring through the afterglow, inevitably forced his head to droop forward. The soles of boots and legs wrapped in puttees and the bottom strap of the pack of the man ahead of him were all he could see. The pack seemed heavy enough to push him through the asphalt pavement. And all about him was the faint jingle of equipment and the tramp of feet. Every part of him was full of sweat. He could feel vaguely the steam of sweat that rose from the struggling bodies around him. But gradually he forgot everything but the pack tugging at his shoulders, weighing down his thighs and ankles and feet, and the monotonous rhythm of his feet striking the pavement and of the other feet, in front of him, behind him, beside him, crunching, crunching.

So much then for the manner of the book's saying, and there can be no doubt as to the fitness of its expression. But is it well thought out? Were many of those who served overseas so ill treated as to become moral and physical wrecks, driven into their various states of self-destruction by the machinery of the army? These questions are not to be answered, should not be approached, in fact, except by those who saw service at the front as enlisted men. And these men will, beyond doubt, if they take into consideration every aspect of such cases as came within their experience, say no.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Dos Passos has produced a book which is of immense value. But that value does not consist in the truth with which it reveals conditions suffered by the enlisted man in the American Army during the Great War. It consists rather in the truth with which it reveals conditions which will have to be undergone by enlisted men eventually, if the present system reaches its logical development. Furthermore, appearing as it does during the effort to bring about an end to all war, *Three Soldiers*, voicing the terrible warning that it does, should be read by the entire reading public, and acted upon.

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### THREE POEMS

By MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT

#### THE BELL

Loneliness tolls through me  
As a bell that shatters  
The silence of a tower.  
I catch my breath  
And think of little matters.

## WIND

Beauty's wings are frail  
With too much loveliness,  
They quiver and grow pale,  
A bitter wind blows over us.

I let my banners fly  
Toward you, my love, they stream  
Crimson beneath the sky.

Beauty is a dream,  
Her wings grow faint and piteous,  
Unmourned shall beauty die,  
A bitter wind blows over us.

## O GOLDEN WASP

You with the sun on your wings  
After what dream are you flying?

Have you forgotten the honey of plums,  
O golden wasp?

Your delicate body quivers and trembles,  
Your voice is a threatening viol:

"Leave the fat bees to hoard  
Sweetness. I choose  
Ecstatic ritual in the sun,  
Sculpture in mud  
And the harsh joy of stinging!"



## THE SKETCH BOOK

### "ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL FEW"

By ROBERT McBLAIR

The inverted bowl of heaven, mottled with dirty clouds, pressed heavily upon the humid atmosphere of the early morning. The leaves of the poplar trees along the dusty red clay road curled up their silver sides, presaging rain, and the cicada's shrill call was muffled.

The old doctor drew rein before the long south porch of the summer boarding house. He had been called hurriedly. He wound the reins about his whipstock, stepped from the creaking buggy, and rang the bell. He was aged and weary and he looked with lack-luster eyes out upon the sweep of lush green grass, the round green trees, and the blue encircling hills.

"One of the days in the world," he murmured. "One of the beautiful few."

Nearby, on the feathered branches of a fern beneath a bearing apple tree, a swarm of new born May flies — the flies that live only for a day — crawled aimlessly. They walked and strengthened their legs; detached from their bodies the brief length of their sticky wings and moved them ineffectually; prepared themselves for the vicissitudes of their life time, — a life time that must crowd childhood and youth, mating, high adventure and relentless death into the brief hours between the sunshine of morning and the shadows of night.

As he watched them, the doctor's face grew grim. The door of the house opened and he went heavily up the winding stairs. In a large pleasant room a young wife lay upon the bed, her face twisted with pain. She was soon to bear a child. There was much to be done and little assistance. As the doctor weariedly busied himself

his mind was trying to reach out beyond that bowl that smothers the world. His wonder had never dulled at the coming of new life. A phantom soul apparently entered each being with its first gasp of breath, — and silently and as mysteriously vanished with its last. The morning drew on, and presently its quiet was troubled by a thin wail that seemed to cry out a question and a challenge to the inattentive universe. The mother's arm enfolded a child.

The old doctor descended the winding stairs and went out upon the long south porch. A plume of white cloud circled the rim of heaven and yellow sunshine spattered the green world with light and shade. The porch was a cross section of the summer colony's life. Children gambled and fought up and down its length; the younger matrons sewed or played bridge; and in a warm corner out of the wind, shawled old ladies sat with folded hands and lived again in words the years that had gone by.

A thin dapper gentleman in the evening of life, hungry for masculine conversation, accosted the doctor.

"The deadest place in the world," said he, with the humorous sweep of a thin hand. "But you have been busy. Even in the midst of death there is life."

The doctor smiled. His eyes traveled to where, in the sunshine, a swarm of tiny May flies, like a golden mist, swirled and dipped joyously in the noontide of life, drinking deep of their hour of mating and high adventure. Through them, as through the nimbus of the glory that is youth, his eyes followed a boy and a girl crossing the lawn. The breeze pressed their white clothes to their lithe urgent bodies, sunlight became entangled in their hair and struck out the graceful line of throat beneath their lifted faces. Youth tripping with light feet across the lawn of the world. The girl sang:

"The year's at the spring,  
The day's at the morn,

The morning's at seven,  
The hillside's dew pearled . . ."

The boy interrupted her with some careless jest and their clear, high laughter fled beautifully across the valley.

The doctor mounted his buggy, unwound the reins and drove slowly homeward. He had but just ended his luncheon and was about to lie down for a rest when another call came from the boarding house, this time a call of alarm. He hitched up his clay colored mare and drove again along the dusty road to the south porch.

The boarding house was strangely quiet and the dapper thin gentleman led him to a room on the first floor where a withered elderly lady, the gentleman's wife, lay with waxen face upon the pillows. The attack had been sudden. A faint pulse fluttered in the delicate wrist, but the failing forces of life were scarce strong enough to carry on the battle. The doctor bent to his task. The afternoon shadows lengthened, evening came, and presently over the still house a huge hand pinned up the black shroud of night with infrequent stars. Inside, the tired old doctor sat with his face in his hands. For a miracle had been performed again, and she who had been the thin gentleman's wife was escaped invisibly from the narrow room and from the sensuous world.

The old doctor rose and, putting on his hat, went out into the sweet freshness of the night. The thin gentleman, no longer dapper, followed him closely as if fearing to be left alone on the earth. They walked to the end of the porch and the doctor unwound his reins.

"In the midst of life there is death," the thin gentleman quavered. They stood and watched the tattered gray clouds stretched in ungainly patterns across the clean heavens. The wind was rising. "It seems as if it were yesterday that we were married." The thin gentleman paused. "No," he said softly, "it seems this morning."

A single large drop of rain fell between them and broke upon the feathered branches of a fern at their feet. The doctor's thoughts wandered out over the lawn, into the tangled grasses where, quivering insensibly to the cold breath of the heedless wind, lay scattered atoms, the May flies, their day gone by.

The old doctor mounted his creaking buggy and drove back along the red clay road. The wind shrieked through the trees and tore to shreds the dirty ungraceful clouds. The round moon, with a white face, fled frightened across the heavens.

In the east showed faintly the watered milk of dawn. The storm for a moment held its breath. Through the vacuum of sound the doctor heard, across the dark silent fields, the thin, high wail of a new born babe, like a cry of question and of challenge.

### A LANDLORD OF NO SCHOOL

By M. A. SHAW

Donald's not a landlord by choice at all; the position's been thrust on him by circumstances, and I doubt whether he's altogether at home in it. Certainly he's not the typical one; but I think in many way he's the better for that.

Years ago, he and Sandy his brother were net fishermen on the Georgian Bay, with a snug shanty, under a ledge of rock, giving on a quiet harbor, all conveniently near the open water of the bay. A sister kept house. In those early days there was no thought of guests; but when the bay was discovered as a summer resort, gradually the fame of the genuine souls who would for a month or two give board to a few campers needing rest and play, spread far. A shelter was put up to accommodate the

increasing number; an addition to that again; and finally a fifty-room building relegated the little fishing shanty into a quarters for the 'guides'.

In and out among the gradually increasing number of guests went Sandy, the prime mover in the new business that had come almost unsought. "It came easy for him," Donald told me later. "In and oot among them he was. Aye. 'Weel, boys, what's tomorrow?' or 'What luck today, boys?' — jokin', givin' or takin' a suggestion, tellin' a yarn. Aye. Sandy could do it."

But Sandy died — slipped out suddenly one day, sitting in his boat; and the brothers who had grown up together in the Highlands of Scotland and had for years wrested from deep water a stern living together here until this new business came, were separated. And what was full in Donald's mind at that sudden separation was not so much the new business as the old — the old counsels together, the snatches together of safe and warm shanty leisure set sharply over against exposure and cold, against wind and rain and sea.

But this was long before I discovered the place. When I landed from the steamer, Donald was pointed out to me as being in charge. I remember thinking that in that group of people on the dock, Donald was distinguished in a way. The utter absence in his clothing of anything that indicated summer struck me for one thing — no thought of impressing on boat passengers or others the idea of a summer resort; and it came in upon me with even greater force that among that group of shaven faces on the dock, Donald's neat full-whiskered one was a kind of a relief. A spare medium-sized man in shirt sleeves, and peaked cloth cap, and used clothes. Spectacles, too, of that peculiar grinding and convexity as to suggest distorted eyes — a mistake, as I saw later, when to my "I can get a room?" he answered with his characteristic Scotch "aye" and led the way. There was no office or clerk, nor is there to this day — no formality of register-

ing. One enters the hotel as one would a private house, is introduced to Donald's wife, is shown one's room, and is given the same freedom one would have as the guest of a friend. . . .

No, Donald is not 'in and oot' among the guests. A certain instinct, perhaps a touch of shyness, makes him leave them pretty much to themselves. But he likes a talk informally and can give an opinion with great vigor and decision. I remember one morning on the dock, a half dozen men were admiring an excellent new canoe that had come in the night before. "Gentlemen," cried Donald, stretching out his hand in a gesture, "if I had ma way, I'd have every one of them broken to pieces wi' an ax. They're no the thing for this watter." An altogether fierce utterance, signifying great intensity of conviction. I was surprised. I have been a canoe man all my life; I had one with me at the time; moreover, I had talked with Donald about it a short time before, hinting of a pretty strong attachment between me and the tiny craft. "Aye," said Donald. "Attachment, aye." And the fun of it was I thought Donald was falling in with my idea; but after that explosion on the dock, I wasn't at all sure. In the cadence of "aye" was a meaning, perhaps, that escaped me.

And this word 'aye' that may mean so many things according to intonation is in a way characteristic of Donald. It is not only his favorite word, but the economy of it is characteristic of his whole speech. Putting very baldly and abruptly what he would think highly ridiculous, I should say that Donald is a born story teller, though I never heard him tell a story in the ordinary sense. But it came in on me after long acquaintance that this extraordinarily reticent man has the two prime requisites: an eye for the significant and a certain intensity and brevity of utterance. They are part of the man's nature; they are elemental. He speaks in flashes, in vivid clipped phrases, for the most part punctuated liberally with "ayes".

"Aye, man. Many a time Sandy and me — aff before daylight — oot to the nets — beatin' an' beatin' — an' lookin' and lookin' — maybe after a big win' — to pick up the buoys. Aye. Wee things, ye ken, in a world of watter. Aye."

The experience seemed to have burnt itself on his mind so that even in memory it still glowed, and shot fire into gesture and eye in the telling. And generally it is the past that one gets from Donald in these snippets of talk.

"Logs? Logs; aye. When Sandy an' me came first, the haystacks were a' painted white — a mark for the tow-boats — fine deep watter — and the road doon into the Moon River — full, full — awa' doon — logs. Aye."

There comes regularly across the ocean from the Highland home, a local newspaper. With this in his hand and fresh excitement in his eye, Donald met me in the hall: —

"The paper frae hame," he said. "An auld fairmer and his son chased by a bool. Weel, they rin, but the bool was gainin' on the fairmer. So the son faced aboot. The bool came wi' a rush. The son seized it by the horns — gied a long twust: — the bool lay dead at his feet!"

He stretched out his hands to indicate the fallen and defeated animal; then without another word, he went back to the reading; and that image of filial affection, courage, and brute strength flashed upon me by Donald's dramatic telling, is vivid in my mind to this day.

An unerring ability to touch the significant is seen in all this, not only to touch it but to convey it — the very core of things. With the same unfailing accuracy he has his finger, quite unconsciously I think, on the heart of his position as host on this Georgian-Bay playground. The way it was revealed to me is in my memory still very fresh. It came spontaneously from the man, and could only have come from one whose heart was "in the right place"; and I confess it added much kindness to the brief leisure I, already a man touched with gray, was snatching from a busy life.

We were having one of our accidental 'cracks' in the shelter and sunshine of a rock. Suddenly Donald was called.

"Ho! what's up?" came from him involuntarily; "I'm wanted, I must go." And then turning to me as he was off: "Noo, rin away and play, laddie; rin away and play." . . .

It sits on the point of a long narrow irregularly shaped island, this hotel of my landlord's, far on the outer edge of the fringe, yet in perfect shelter from big seas — they chose well in the old fishing days. On all sides the sky is visible from zenith to horizon; there are water stretches for miles; and the land to the east is low and unfeatured. One is much outdoors; all the processes of an empty world stare at one; and I was struck with the number of times the breeze on the very finest of days changes its quarter. I spoke of it one day to Donald.

"Aye," he said, and I thought there was even more than usual finality and mystery in the expression. "Aye," he repeated, looking upward, as if the great vault might give the solution of an unsolved problem. And then very simply: "It seems, sir, as if the face of the sky is never still. Changin', changin' — aye." A kind of reverent wonder was in the speech, as of a spirit long bathed in the elemental homelessness of the Georgian Bay airs — a resigned wonder, too, as if the keeping of the winds' secret were in good hands. So it appeared to me. I confess I wondered; for Donald is untutored save in the experience gained by living; and in this rare instance, I found myself likening his speech to

"Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,  
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues."

A great fund of humor deep down in this man withal. Not often shown perhaps, except with familiars and intimates; and my single experience of it was quite accidental. I was tinkering my boat in the little harbor one



day when a party was putting off in a rowboat from the dock on the other side. I did not notice at first who it was. But suddenly I heard a strange laughter. It was Donald's. He stood alone on the rocks, directing a mighty volley at the departing boat crammed with friends. Never before or since have I heard laughter like it. I was struck by the giant-like nature of it — an enormous thing of three or four notes in range, prolonged and renewed — a great masculine utterance, altogether humorous, but giving me, as I listened, a touch of awe. Here was a side of Donald I had never dreamed of — nor have I met it again.

"What's up?" I said, as the boat passed.

"Oh, Donald's laughing at us in Gaelic, I think."  
And I leave it at that.

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## DUST

By LOUISE AYRES GARNETT

My grave shall be as deep as yours,  
As soft as yours, as wide and long,  
The barricades that hedge it round  
As high as yours, as dense, as strong.

Back we shall go to our native bed,  
The black, the white, the brown, the red,  
Blurring the pattern and breaking the mesh  
Of human pomp and mortal flesh.

## TWO POEMS

By CATHARINE CRANMER

### WINTER

Along the hillside  
Trails a thin scarf of snow;  
Trees,  
Bared and silent,  
Lift long clean arms  
To a lucid sky.  
The air has an edge of steel  
High cast and pure.  
A chopper's steady axe  
Falls with echoless thuds;  
From daring bird-throats  
Broken crystals of sound  
Are scattered.  
A stealthy wind  
Pries at the edges of my coat,  
The mild passion of the sun  
Finds me responsive.

### CROSSING

A quiet roadway,  
Snow-covered,  
Wagon-grooved,  
Crossed by a tiny singing stream  
Released from silent keeping  
Under grey concealing ice,  
To move and sing unevenly along  
Until it passes  
Under another cold still covering.

The stream had lived  
Before it reached the roadway,  
It still moves on  
And still sings softly  
Under its restraining roof.

## EDITORIALS

### TO THE NEW READER —

This issue of *THE MIDLAND* is sent to some hundreds of new readers. Their number is not such as to seem important to the circulation department of a commercial magazine. But to the editor of *THE MIDLAND* these new readers seem to offer the magazine's most encouraging opportunity. If *THE MIDLAND* can secure during 1922 their hearty approval of the thing it is trying to do, its existence will seem to be justified. For this reason it seems worth while at the outset to state for these new readers the purpose of the magazine, the ideal which it hopes to approach.

*THE MIDLAND* believes in the opportunity and the necessity for sincere artistic achievement in contemporary American life. It seeks to encourage such achievement, especially in the art of writing and especially in the middle west, by bringing worthy fiction, poetry, and essays, in fitting form, to the attention of sympathetic and discerning readers. In the second place, *THE MIDLAND* is not commercial. Its editor believes that a literary magazine, like a church or a school, should be governed by other considerations than those of profit. Accordingly every cent of income for the seven years of *THE MIDLAND*'s existence has been devoted to the actual expense of printing and mailing the magazine. *THE MIDLAND* pays no salaries, nor does it pay for manuscripts. Possibly within a few years it may be able to make moderate financial return for the material it publishes and for the work connected with carrying it on. But it is pledged to remain uncommercial. No one will ever "make money" from *THE MIDLAND*.

As a result of this purpose and these conditions, the

relation between writers and editor on the one hand, and between editor and readers on the other, has been and is intended to be, exceptional. For every manuscript accepted and printed in the magazine, a score have been returned with detailed criticism. Sometimes writers can be helped to find place in other magazines. Such personal contact is considered a part of the duty and privilege involved in editing the magazine. *THE MIDLAND* has no rejection slip.

The editor hopes that *THE MIDLAND* will never grow so large that he will cease to feel some degree of personal relation with each reader, as well. Letters of comment, of criticism, of suggestion, are at all times invited and are especially appreciated. The active friendship of its subscribers has been responsible for *THE MIDLAND*'s life. May it seem worthy of the same loyalty on the part of its new readers.

#### AND THE OLD

Volume Eight begins! Seven years' work completed — work full of mistakes and shortcomings, carried on sometimes at cost to personal interests and ambitions, yet satisfying in the doing. On the subscription list are a score or two of names which have been there from the beginning — names of people who have shared all of *THE MIDLAND*'s problems, who know the whole story. There are more names of those who have helped to bear the magazine's burdens during the last few most troubled and uncertain years. For these people, most of whom the editor has never met, whom he knows only through the infrequent interchange of brief letters, he feels a degree of regard which it is difficult to suggest. He would be glad to express to them something of what such sense of comradeship as they have given has meant in making possible whatever *THE MIDLAND* has been able to accomplish. And he wants to assure them that insofar

as their ideals for the magazine are understood, and insofar as that ideal is attainable through the agencies, human and material, which are at hand, they will not be disappointed in *THE MIDLAND* in the years that are to come.

### THE NEW FORMAT

Readers who have seen earlier issues of *THE MIDLAND* may be interested in the reasons for the slight change in form which will be noticed in the new volume. In its first years *THE MIDLAND* was printed on a special heavy paper which was manufactured in a sheet of peculiar shape. This sheet folded to the old size of the magazine. But during the war this paper became unobtainable, and after careful consideration the present stock was chosen. This is made in a larger sheet, and accordingly, in retaining the old size for the magazine during the past two years, we have wasted a small fraction of each sheet used. The new size will make use of the whole sheet. At the same time the type page has been enlarged in proportion. A few other changes have been made in the interest of a closer approach to an ideal of harmony and beauty in typography. The editor hopes that the readers will agree with him in liking the new format even better than the old.

### "THE SKETCH BOOK"

The new department which appears in *THE MIDLAND* for the first time this month is intended to provide a place for informal essays, outdoor sketches, and very short pieces of fiction, which have heretofore been unprovided for in the arrangement of the magazine. The department will not appear in every number, and will be varied in content. Some contributions which have not before seemed available for the magazine will now find a place; it is hoped that the resulting greater variety will be pleasant to the readers.

## IN 1922

The early explorers of the middle west saw visions of splendor and beauty. As they guided their frail canoes down swift rivers and skirted the noisy shores of the Great Lakes, or followed savage guides through the twilight of the deep woods or across the leagues of treeless plains, they were sustained by a dream of the human achievements which were to follow them. The traveller in the middle west today is likely to think that we have forgotten how to dream. He is likely to see from his train window, in the hundreds of farms so much alike and the scores of little towns with their huddled laundries, garages, bake-shops, and pool-rooms, no evidence of that vision without which the people perish. Even some who have lived among us have made books which deny that we have souls. But those who love the middle west know that its people have their dreams, sometimes distorted to be sure by ignorance and untoward circumstance, but often as intelligent and noble as could be desired. Perhaps nowhere else in the crazed and saddened world is the spirit of man still so eager, so wistful, so unafraid. In the end we shall have beauty. We shall have splendor. Give us time.

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